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ABSTRACT

This 5-year ethnographic study examines the issue of educational opportunity at Russell High School, a multiethnic school in Eastown (school and city both pseudonyms). Focusing on the beliefs and values of students, teachers, and administrators, this study reveals how prevailing cultural beliefs, the collective nature of the student population, and the structure of the school system worked in concert, even though unintentionally, to foster inequality. The study explores how American cultural conceptions of individualism and adolescence were manifested in the classrooms, two reform attempts, a protest by African American students, and the local media. The first section, "Educational Opportunity in Practice," examines the day-to-day life of the school. The second section, "The Resilience of the Status Quo," describes how prevailing conceptions of educational opportunity endured. "Promoting Faith in Educational Opportunity," the third section, offers insight into why educational opportunity was often unquestioned at the school and in the city. The concluding section and chapter, "So What?," considers the implications of the previous chapter for educational practice. This section emphasizes two essentials for reform: giving teachers more time to do their work and giving students greater power and responsibility. (Contains 196 references.) (SLD)

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